



Library and Information Association of New Zealand  
Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa

July 16, 2023

## **SUBMISSION TO HE AROTAKE PŌTITANGA MOTUHAKE THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL REVIEW**

This submission to He Arotake Pōtitanga Motuhake the Independent Electoral Review is being made by Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA). It is being made on behalf of library and information professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially those working in public libraries.

### **ABOUT TE RAU HERENGA O AOTEAROA LIANZA**

LIANZA has provided leadership to the wider library and information profession for over 122 years. With a strong national network, active member communities and volunteer base, an established profile, and strong international connections, LIANZA spans all parts of the diverse library and information sector. This includes public, school, tertiary, health, prison, law, government libraries and other special libraries and information services.

LIANZA has worked in partnership with [Te Rōpū Whakahau](#), the professional body supporting Māori working in libraries, for over 25 years. It also maintains a strong relationship with the Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa National Library of New Zealand (National Library). LIANZA maintains close relationships with the School Libraries Association New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA) and Public Libraries New Zealand (PLNZ). We are a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) which enables shared standards, systems and networks of library services globally.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our specific recommendations are regarding accessing the Electoral Roll:

R73. We recommend retaining the availability of the main and supplementary rolls for public inspection at libraries and electoral offices.

R80. We recommend still publishing the *Index of Streets and Places* and supplying it to libraries and relevant institutions whilst no longer selling this publication.

We would recommend that LIANZA seek to work with the panel on the arrangements for accessing the electoral rolls via libraries.

### **COMMENTS**

We are particularly concerned about the ongoing access to and retaining of printed electoral rolls. These are an invaluable resource for family historians, local historians and other researchers for a wide variety of purposes. For family historians, genealogists and those researching their whakapapa in particular, these rolls provide information about ancestors that is not available from other sources and provides significant context for family research. With fewer people having landlines these days we can no longer rely on telephone directories to track people.



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Heritage collections and libraries throughout the country already have holdings of these electoral rolls and the preservation and protection of this information on behalf of the whole community should be ensured on an ongoing basis. The printed rolls only contain the name, address and occupation of each voter and we do not believe they provide information that could be used for data-matching purposes.

We note that the online database Ancestry provides paid access to New Zealand electoral rolls up to 2010. Will this continue if the proposed changes are implemented? Ancestry provides useful coverage of the New Zealand electoral rolls. However, smaller libraries across the country are unlikely to be able to justify the subscription fees Ancestry charge and therefore the printed rolls support smaller communities.

As acknowledged in the interim report, access to the current rolls via public libraries helps the public to check the current rolls to ensure they are registered in the correct electorate. Particularly for those unable to do so online. This helps to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the rolls. LIANZA is concerned that access to printed rolls be supplied in libraries so that voters can check their own details when they do not have or are unable to access a computer. Libraries have an important role to play in supporting voters to ensure they are not disadvantaged technologically. Removal of paper-based resources on the assumption of digital access and skills in the community and impacts on people's ability to access information. The electoral rolls are public information and should remain accessible in the public domain.

While we acknowledge the concerns around privacy of information, it is noted that the NZ Privacy Commissioner Te Mana Mātāpono Matatapu explains why it is important that the electoral roll is public.

*"Anyone can access the information on the electoral roll. It is an open national record of who has the right to vote. That transparency is essential in an open and democratic country."*

[privacy.org.nz/tools/knowledge-base/view/539](https://www.privacy.org.nz/tools/knowledge-base/view/539)

#### **FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Is the intention of this proposal to remove just the current rolls from public access? If wider than just the current electoral rolls, what is the date cut-off point?

How would someone check their details on the roll if the electoral roll is not publicly available?

In relation to recommendation 80 – removing the *Index of Streets and Places* from sale, does the review intend to allow libraries to continue to have these publications on the shelves? It holds no personal name details to warrant privacy concerns. It is a very useful quick reference tool to finding this information.